

Vanes Martirosyan Must Beat Kassim Ouma

Written by David A. Avila

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If you saw Vanes Martirosyan fight as an amateur then you cannot be surprised at his success as a professional. The Glendale resident is just inches away from a world title fight.

Martirosyan (26-0, 17 KOs) meets former junior middleweight world champion Kassim Ouma (26-6-1, 16 KOs) on Saturday in a 10-round bout at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. The Top Rank fighter knows what the fight means.

"It's a very important fight for me but I'm ready," said Martirosyan, 23.

The Armenian boxer-puncher shocked many observers outside of California when he plowed through more famous boxers from around the country and emerged as the representative for the 2004 U.S. Olympic boxing team.

As a professional, the junior middleweight has endured speed bumps along the way. Freddie Roach was his initial pro trainer, then Martirosyan moved to Ronnie Shields. It didn't suit his style so he returned to Roach. Now, six years after turning professional, he finally looks like that amateur with fire in his eyes.

"I feel really ready," said Martirosyan who just fought a few weeks ago when he stopped Willie Lee in three. "This will be an important fight for me."

Ouma, 31, was once a fighter whose style confused and confounded opponents with his volume punching. Aside from his eclectic style, the African fighter can take a good punch as he proved against Jermain Taylor and others. Plus, he is a former world champion.

Roach, who works with Martirosyan daily, knows all about Ouma.

"I've had one of my fighters face Kassim Ouma before," said Roach, who prepared Russia's Roman Karmazin when he upset Ouma just after the African fighter had signed with Golden Boy Promotions. "You have to use a jab and movement."

The trainer considered the best in the sport today also is one of the best prognosticators in boxing, especially with one of his own fighters.

"Vanes is one fight away from fighting for a world title," said Roach, who is confident that Martirosyan will emerge victorious.

The junior middleweight contender is confident too.

"I'm focused on Kassim Ouma. I know what he has done in his career and I'm prepared to do

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my best,” said Martirosyan.

If Martirosyan wins, then titleholders Yuri Foreman or Alfredo “Perro” Angulo are on the bull’s eye.

“Those are great fights,” said Roach.

Yes, they are and so is this fight with Ouma.